"Childbirth normally takes place in the hut and is a public event. Births are well attended by women and children but rarely by the men, who display little interest in such matters. If a birth takes place during the day, even the prospective father will not be present because as soon as a woman begins to feel birth pangs she notifies her husband and he departs for the hunt to seek a name for the child. (5)

5. See Naming, p. 74.

The coming of labor pains necessitates certain preparations for the birth. These are usually made by the woman herself. Since parturition takes place in the hammock, she ties a rope (éčo-séko-sákwa, 'childbirth rope') above it, so as to have something secure to grasp during labor. She also loosens the hard ground under the hammock with a digging stick so that the child will have a soft bed on which to be born. Sometimes she also spreads ashes over the soft earth further to cushion the newborn infant. Having finished these preparations the woman lies down in the hammock where she awaits the birth with grunts and groans to which her tribesmen pay little attention."

1: Holmberg--67-68 (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 844

"Of the eight births which I had the good fortune to witness among the Siriono, four took place during the day and four at night. In the former cases the mothers received no help whatever, either during the preparations for the births or during the births themselves. In the other four cases the husbands assisted to the extent of setting fire to a few dried leaves of motacú palm in order to light up the immediate environs of the hammock, but beyond this they gave no help. At all of the births a crowd of women were present, standing by or sitting in adjoining hammocks, gossiping about what it was like when they had their last child or speculating as to whether the prospective child would be a boy or a girl. Not a move was made by these onlookers to assist the parturient women, except in one case when twins were born. [68] In all of the births which I witnessed, except that of the twins, the mothers had no difficulty in delivery. The time of labor varied from 1 to 3 hours, but never extended beyond that limit. In all instances the babies were born head first."

1: Holmberg--68 (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 844

"To exert force furing labor a woman grasps the rope strung above her hammock. The infant, in being born, slides off the outside strings of the hammock on to the soft earth below. Since hammocks are not hung more than a few inches above the floor, the shock to the infant of falling to the ground is not great, yet it is probably sufficient to start it breathing and induce it to show other signs of life. In no case did I see an infant slapped to give it life. All of them started breathing immediately after the shock of birth."

1: Holmberg--68 [2] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 844

"Immediately after the birth the mother gets out of her hammock and kneels on the floor to one side of the infant until the afterbirth is expelled. In all of the cases which I witnessed the afterbirth was expelled in a matter of 10 minutes, but if a woman experiences any difficulty in this matter she is pounded on the back until it does come out."

1: Holmberg--68 [3] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 844

"The proceedings which follow depend to some extent upon whether the birth takes place at night, when the father is present, or during the day, when he is off on the hunt. If the father is present the umbilical cord is cut at once; if not, the mother must await his arrival. The cord is cut by the father with a bamboo knife. After taking a bath he squats on the floor by the infant. The mother then hands him a piece of bamboo, and while she holds the cord away from the placenta, he cuts it about 4 inches from the placental end. After this the mother holds up the cord and the father cuts off a section about 6 inches in length, which is tied to the under side of the hammock to prevent the infant from crying. The remainder of the cord, about 8 inches, is left attached to the infant and is not tied. After all of these proceedings, during which not a word is said, the father returns to his hammock to commence the observance of the couvade. If he has not been present at the birth, the same customs are followed after he returns from the hunt."

1: Holmberg--68 [4] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 844

"Immediately after the afterbirth has been expelled, the mother picks up the newborn infant and begins to scrape the dirt and ashes from its skin and hair with her hands. While thus cleaning the baby she also slightly presses its head from front to back, and its hips inward, so as to make it etúra (beautiful). For a couple of days immediately following childbirth, about every half hour or so, the mother can be observed pressing the infant's head and hips in this fashion to make it beautiful. Having cleaned the baby she gives it a perfunctory bath, from a calabash, after which it is offered suck—usually less than half an hour after birth."

1: Holmberg--68 [5] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 844

"After the baby has been bathed and suckled, the mother begins to clean up the afterbirth which lies under the hammock. No one but she has any contact with this bloody mess. She sits on the ground with the baby in her arms and with one hand scrapes up all evidence of the birth into a pile. This is shoved temporarily into a hole in the ground or placed in a basket, and about 2 weeks later is taken deep into the bush and thrown away. A mother sits on the ground, tending her baby, for about 8 hours following the birth before she again enters her hammock."

1: Holmberg--74 [2] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono-1-2
116, 553, 844, 159

"A specific case will best explain the method of naming. A certain woman at Tibaera called Eantázi (Mother-of-Strong-one) felt birth pangs in the early morning of August 28, 1941. Her husband, Eantándu (Father-of-Strong-one), upon being informed that the infant was soon expected, picked up his bow and arrows and left immediately for the hunt. Before leaving, however, he told me that he was going to look for a yákwa (jaguar) after which to name the baby. The infant was born about 10 a.m. while the father was still out on the hunt. He returned about 5 p.m., carrying a young jaguar on his back. After he had cut the cord, I asked him what the name of the child would be, and he replied, 'Yakwa,' which was the first animal that he had hunted that day.

The above-mentioned method of naming is practiced when the birth takes place during the day. If a child is born at night, when it is impossible for the father to go hunting, other methods are followed. In such cases, the infant may be named after some unusual characteristic that it possesses, such as a clubfoot, or after an animal some characteristic of which it shows a remarkable resemblance to. In the case of the twins whose birth was described above and which took place at night, the female was called Eáta (Many) because more than one child was born; the boy, Eičá (Twisted) because one of his feet was markedly turned inward. In another instance which I observed, an infant was born about 3 o'clock in the morning. Upon arriving belatedly on the scene, I asked the father what the name of the child would be, and he replied, 'Yikína' (Owl monkey).

When I questioned him as to why this name was given to the infant, he replied that while the birth was taking place a troop of owl monkeys passed by the house and were heard chattering."

3: Métraux--113 [7] (no date) 1942 Siriono
116, 844

"Little is known of Siriono observances of the phases of an individual's development. According to Wegner (1934, p. 7), a kind of couvade was observed prior to the birth of a child. An infant's navel cord was cut with a bamboo knife; the mother dried it and attached it to the baby's neck. The father wore feathers glued to his hair, and both parents painted themselves with rucu."